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(54) **SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR DETERMINING A DELAY TIME INTERVAL OF COMPONENTS**

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**G01R 29/02** (2006.01)  
**H03H 11/26** (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **324/76.11; 327/276; 702/79**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** ..... **324/76.11, 324/76.35, 76.54; 327/261, 270, 276, 277, 327/252, 263, 269, 149, 271, 158, 250, 284, 327/395, 400; 702/79, 89; 361/28, 91.3, 361/75, 83, 89, 94, 195**  
See application file for complete search history.

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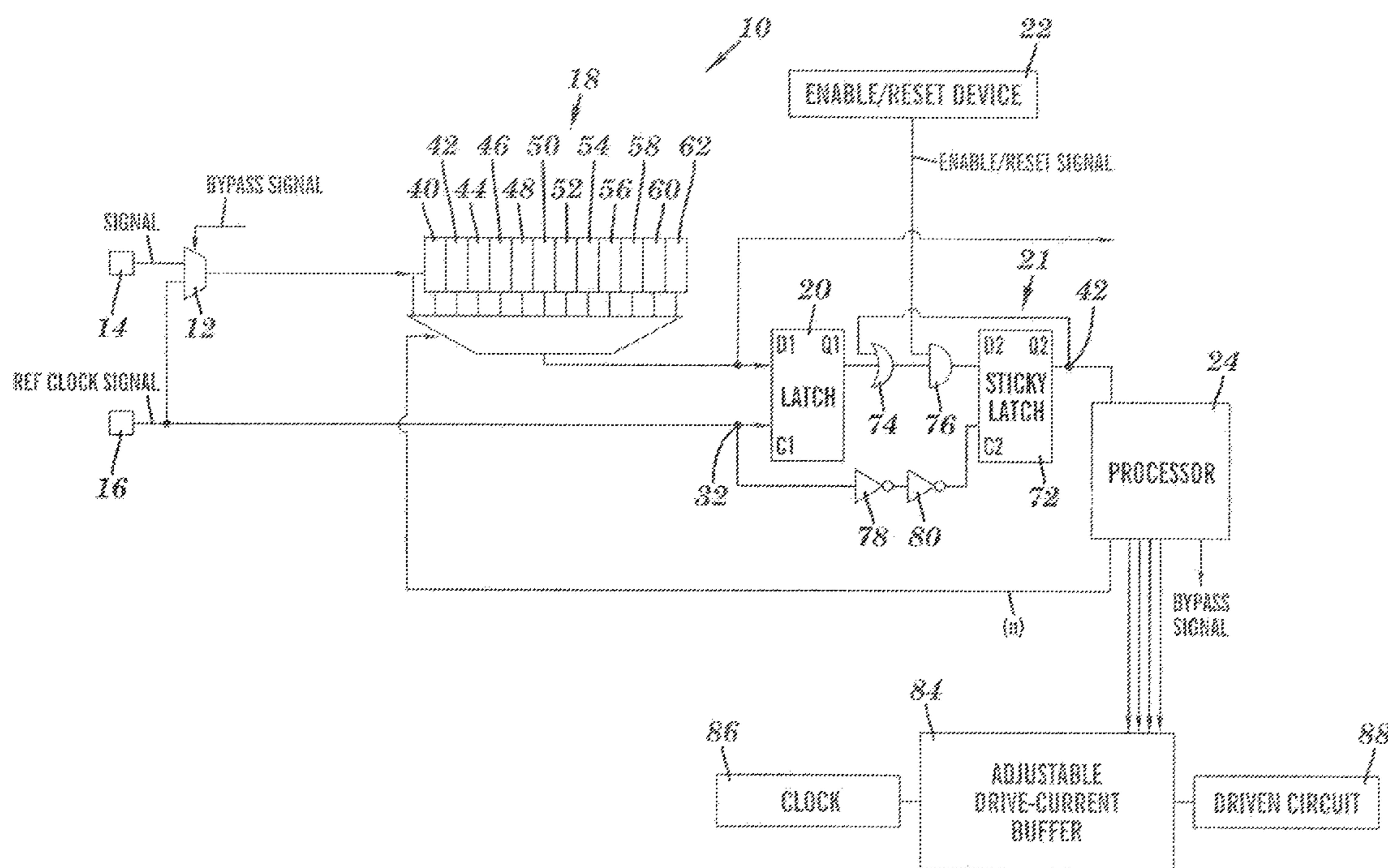
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A system and a method for determining a delay time interval of components are provided. The system includes a delay chain of components having a plurality of components wherein each component of the delay chain of components has a first delay time interval. The system utilizes a reference clock signal to stimulate the delay change of components and monitors a delay clock signal output by the delay chain of components to determine a delay time interval associated with each component in the delay chain of components.

**5 Claims, 7 Drawing Sheets**







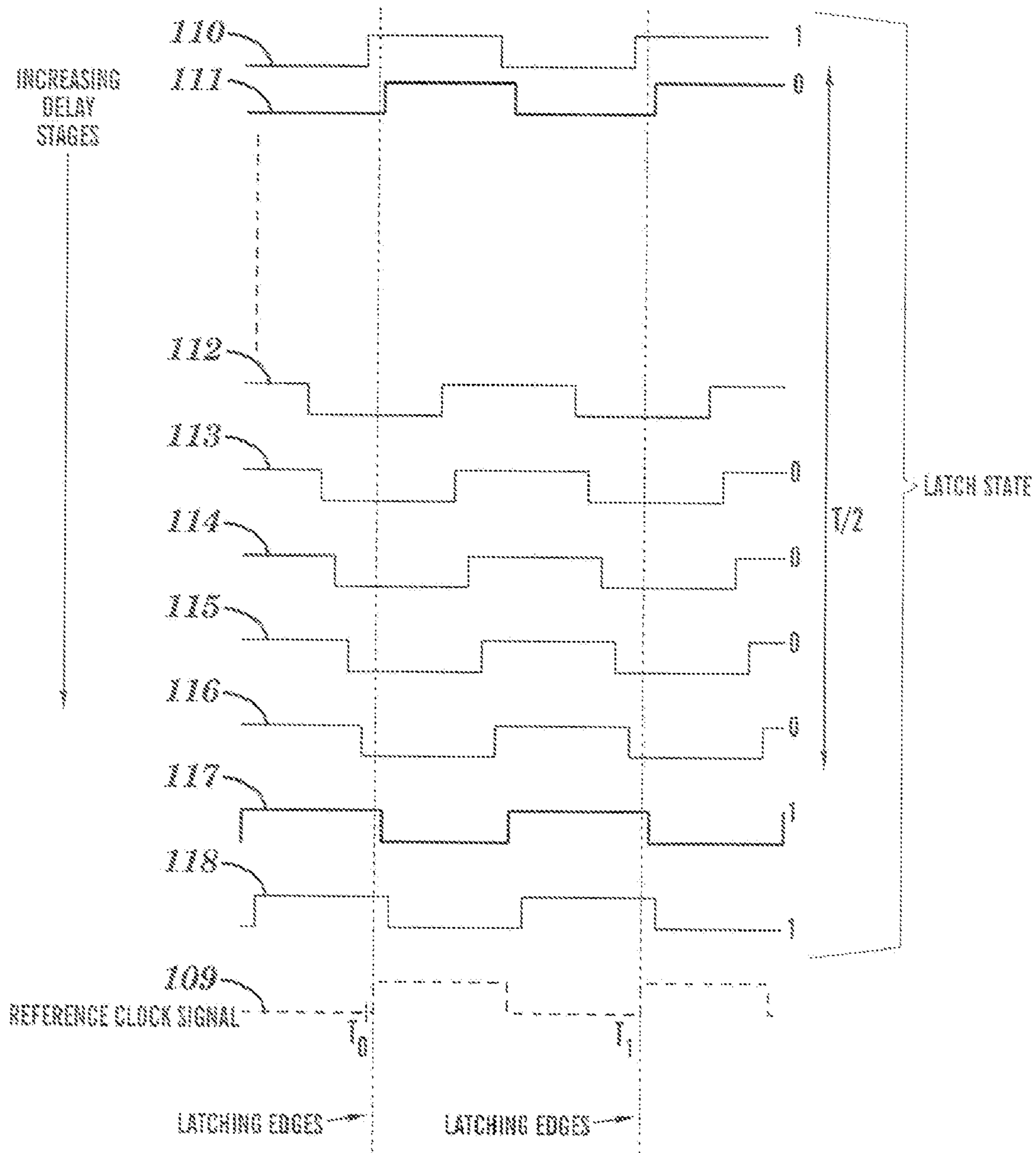


FIG. 3

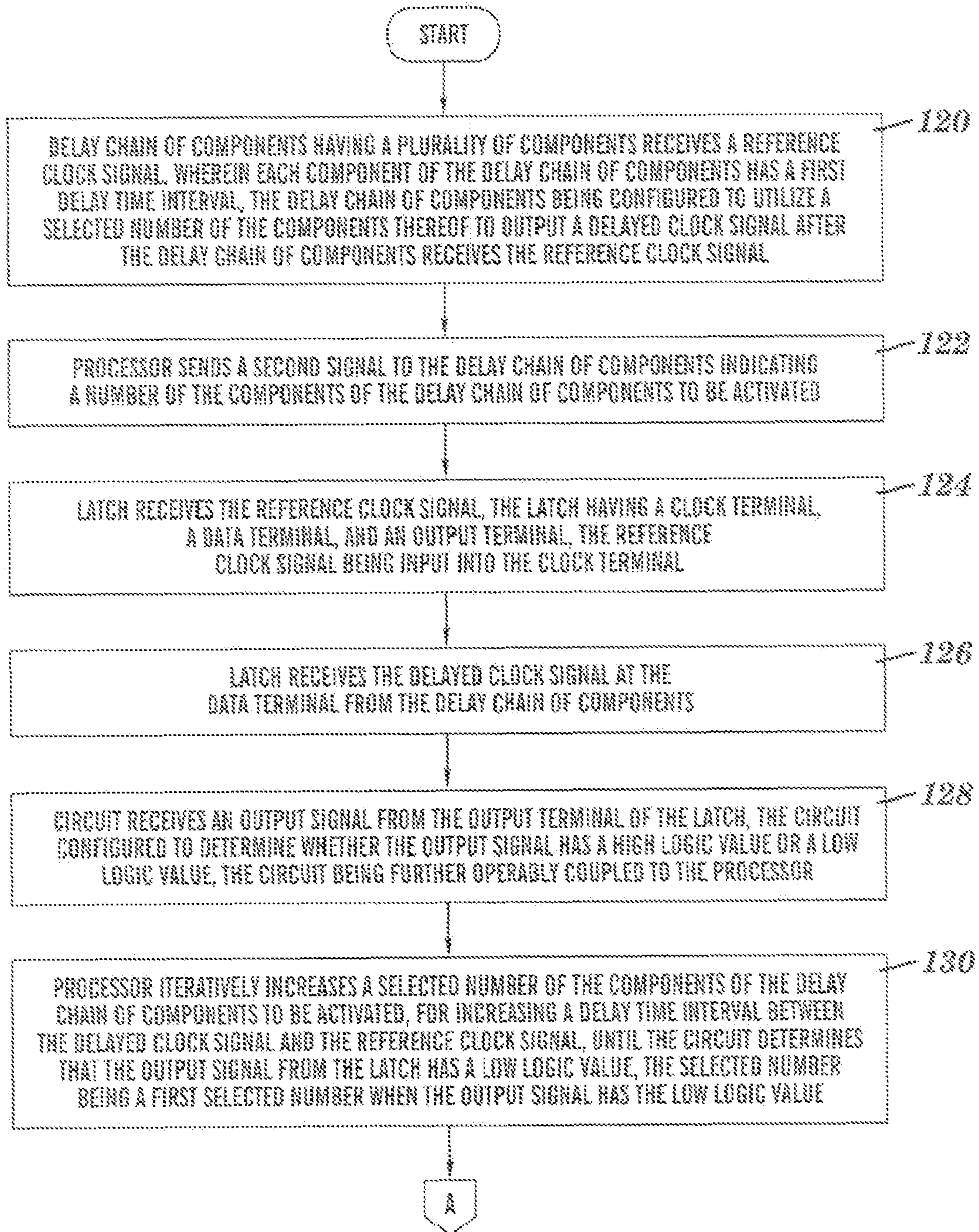


FIG. 4

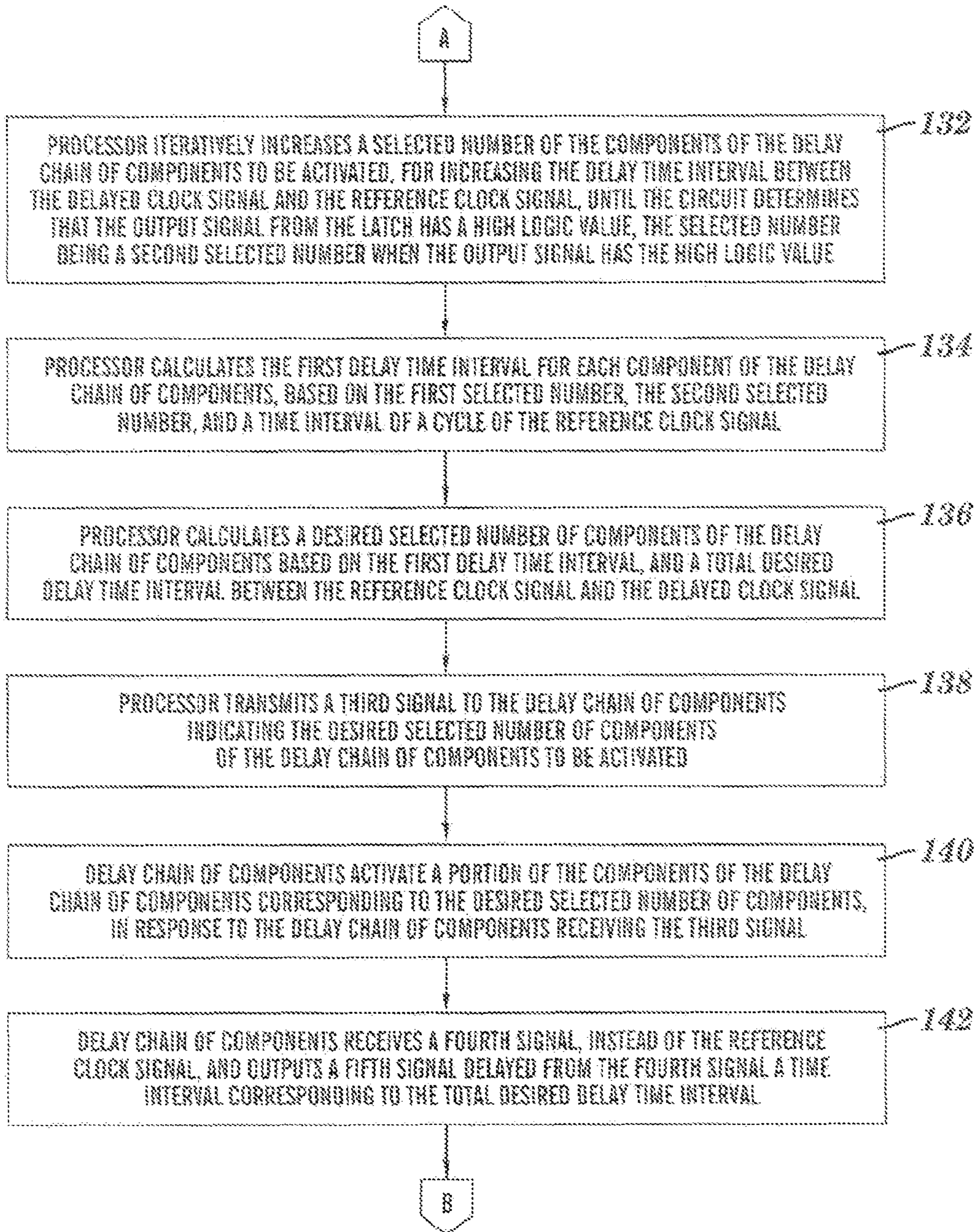
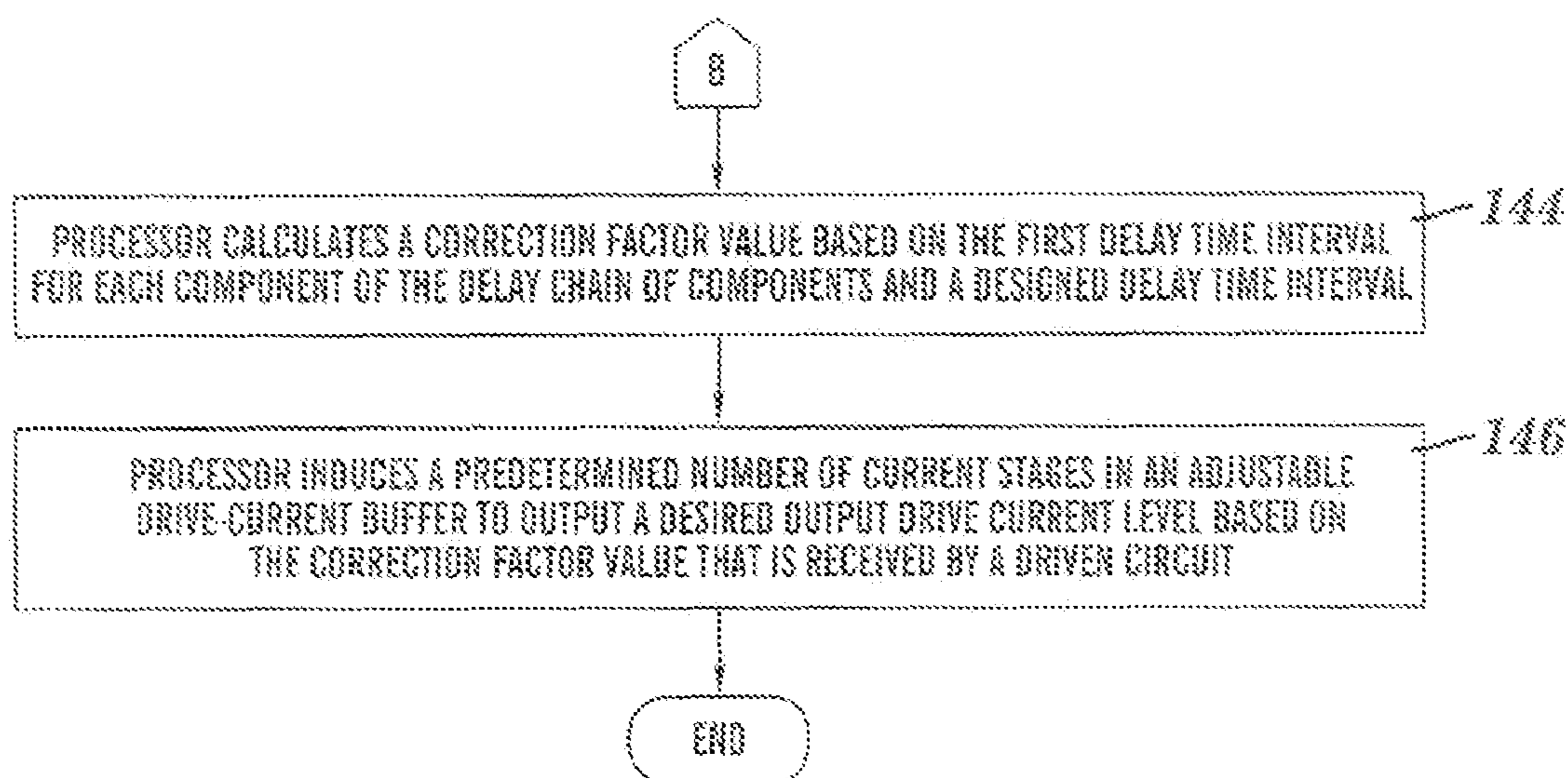


FIG. 5



**FIG. 6**

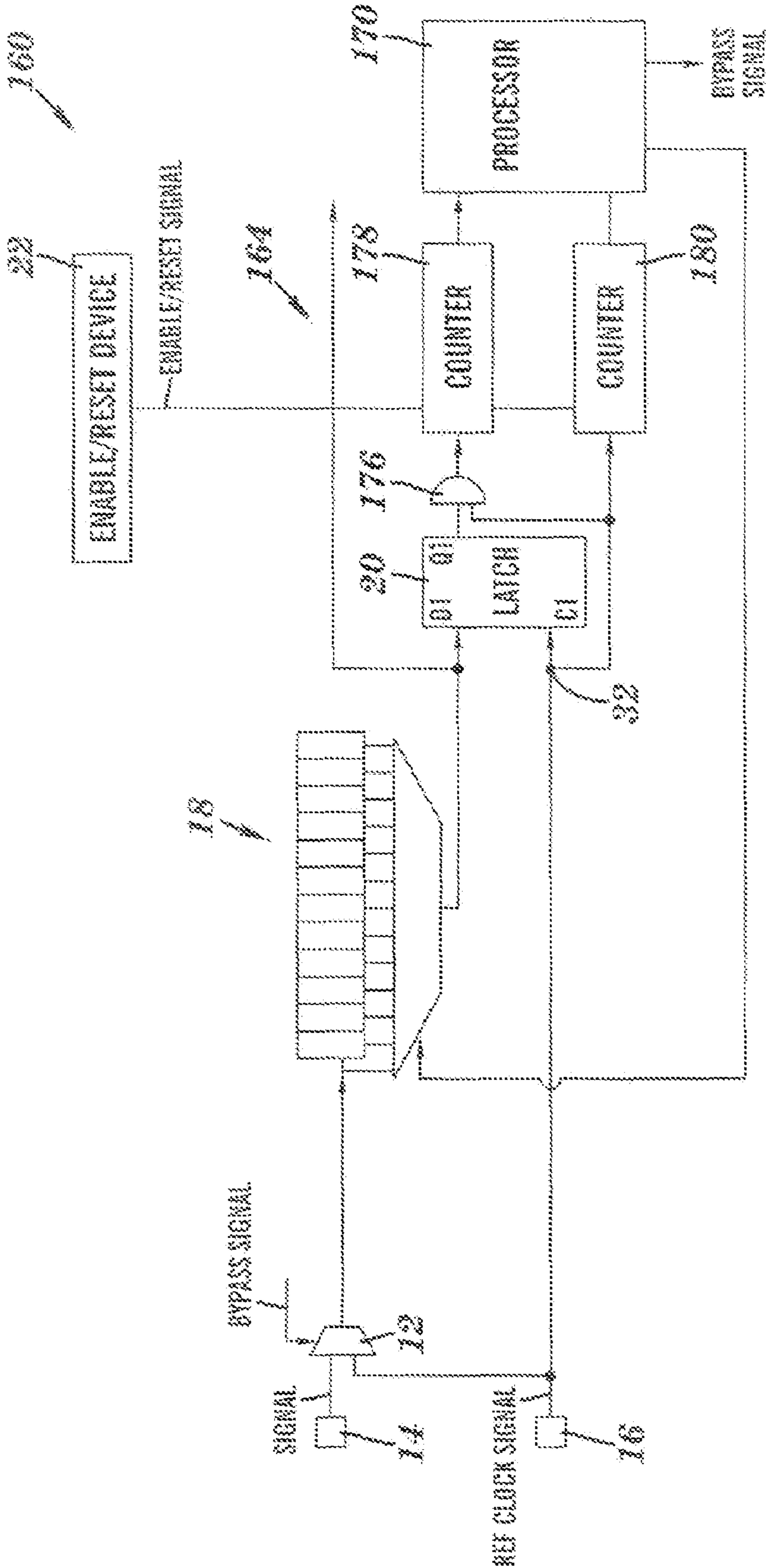


FIG. 7



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## SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR DETERMINING A DELAY TIME INTERVAL OF COMPONENTS

### FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This application relates to a system and a method for determining a delay time interval of components.

### BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

Input/output circuits have utilized delay chains to delay an incoming signal by a known amount. Delay is achieved by transmitting a signal through a concatenated chain of finite delay elements, or stages. However, the delay per stage is not known precisely. In other words, the predicted delay per stage does not correspond to the actual delay per stage. This uncertainty is particularly large in new technologies, making it difficult to design the correct chain length. If too short of a chain is utilized, a chain leads to non-working interface circuit.

Accordingly, the inventors herein have recognized a need for a system for determining a delay time interval of each component utilized in a delay chain of components.

### SUMMARY OF INVENTION

A system for determining a delay time interval of components in accordance with an exemplary embodiment is provided. The system includes a delay chain of components having a plurality of components wherein each component of the delay chain of components has a first delay time interval. The delay chain of components are configured to utilize a selected number of components thereof to output the delayed clock signal after the delay chain of components receives the first clock signal. The system further includes a processor operably communicating with the delay chain of components configured to specify a number of components of the delay chain of components to be activated. The system further includes a latch having a clock terminal, a data terminal, and an output terminal, the first clock signal being input into both the clock terminal and the delay chain of components. The data terminal receives the delayed clock signal from the delay chain of components. The system further includes a circuit operably coupled to the output terminal of the latch configured to determine whether an output signal from the output terminal has a high logic value or a low logic value. The circuit is further operably coupled to the processor. The processor is further configured to iteratively increase a selected number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated, for increasing a delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the first clock signal, until the circuit determines that the output signal from the latch has a low logic value. The selected number is a first selected number when the output signal has the low logic value. The processor is further configured to iteratively increase the selected number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated, for increasing the delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the first clock signal, until the circuit determines that the output signal from the latch has a high logic value. The selected number is a second selected number when the output signal has the high logic value. The processor is further configured to calculate the first delay time interval based on the first selected number and the second selected number.

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A method for determining a delay time interval of components in accordance with another exemplary embodiment is provided. The method includes receiving a first clock signal at a delay chain of components having a plurality of components wherein each component of the delay chain of components has a first delay time interval. The delay chain of components is configured to utilize a selected number of the components thereof to output a delayed clock signal after the delay chain of components receives the first clock signal. The method further includes sending a second signal from a processor to the delay chain of components indicating a number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated. The method further includes receiving the first clock signal at a latch. The latch has a clock terminal, a data terminal, and an output terminal. The first clock signal is input into the clock terminal. The data terminal receives the delayed clock signal from the delay chain of components. The method further includes receiving an output signal from the output terminal at a circuit operably coupled to the output terminal of the latch. The circuit is configured to determine whether the output signal has a high logic value or a low logic value. The circuit is further operably coupled to the processor. The method further includes iteratively increasing a selected number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated utilizing the processor, for increasing a delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the first clock signal, until the circuit determines that the output signal from the latch has a low logic value. The selected number is a first selected number when the output signal has the low logic value. The method further includes iteratively increasing the selected number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated utilizing the processor, for increasing the delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the first clock signal, until the circuit determines that the output signal from the latch has a high logic value. The selected number is a second selected number when the output signal has the high logic value. The method further includes calculating the first delay time interval for each component of the delay chain of components utilizing the processor, based on the first selected number and the second selected number.

### DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a system for determining a delay time interval of components in accordance with an exemplary embodiment;

FIG. 2 is an electrical schematic of an adjustable drive-current buffer utilized in the system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 illustrates a plurality of signal schematics associated with signals generated by the system of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 4-6 are flowcharts of a method for determining a delay time interval of components in accordance with another exemplary embodiment; and

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of another system for determining a delay time interval of components in accordance with another exemplary embodiment.

### DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Referring to FIG. 1, a system 10 for automatically determining a delayed time interval of components is illustrated.

The system 10 includes a switch 12, a signal generator 14, a clock 16, a delay chain of components 18, a circuit 21, an enable/reset device 22, a processor 24, a clock 86, an adjustable drive-current buffer 84, and a driven circuit 88.

The switch 12 is provided to either route a reference clock signal from the clock 16 to the delay chain of components 18 or a signal from the signal generator 14 to the delay chain of components 18. When the switch 12 receives a bypass signal from the processor 24, the switch 12 will route the reference clock signal from the clock 16 to the delay chain of components 18. Alternately, when the switch 12 does not receive the bypass signal from the processor 24, the switch 12 will route the signal from the signal generator 14 to the delay chain of components 18. For purposes of understanding, when the system 10 is determining a delay time interval of components as described in further detail below, the switch 12 will only allow the reference clock signal to propagate to the delay chain of components 18.

The clock 16 is provided to generate a reference clock signal for determining a delay time interval associated with each of the components of the delay chain of components 18. Referring to FIG. 3, in one exemplary embodiment, the clock 16 generates the reference clock signal 109. The reference clock signal 109 has a predetermined period or time interval for each cycle. The clock 16 is electrically coupled to the switch 12, a clock terminal (C) of the latch 20, and to an input terminal of the inverter 78.

The delay chain of components 18 are provided to allow an adjustment of a delay time interval between the reference clock signal and a delay clock signal output by the delay chain of components 18. The delay chain of components 18 includes components 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62 which are electrically coupled in series. Of course, in an alternative embodiment, the delay chain of components 18 can have a different number of components than shown in the exemplary embodiment. The delay chain of components 18 receives a signal from the processor 24, at an input terminal, indicating a number of components of the delay chain of components 18 to be activated for delaying the received reference clock signal. It should be noted that each of the components 40-62 have a delay time interval (t) for propagating a signal through the respective component. For example, when component 40 is the only activated component of the delay chain of components 18, the total delay time interval of the delay chain of components 18 is equal to the delay time interval (t) of the component 40. Further, for example when the components 40, 42 are the only activated components of the delay chain of components 18, the total delay time interval of the delay chain of components 18 is equal to (2\*t). The chain of components 18 has an output terminal electrically coupled to the data terminal (D1) of the latch 20. Further, the chain of components 18 outputs a delayed clock signal that is delayed by a total delay time interval of the delay chain of components 18 with respect to the reference clock signal.

The latch 20 is provided to store or latch a binary value corresponding to the delayed clock signal that is output from the delay chain of components 18 when the reference clock signal transitions from a low logic value (e.g., binary 0) to a high logic value (e.g., binary 1). The latch 20 includes a clock terminal (C1), a data terminal (D1), and an output terminal (Q1). The clock terminal (C1) is electrically coupled to the clock 16. The data terminal (D1) is electrically coupled to an output terminal of the delay chain of components 18. The output terminal (Q1) is electrically coupled to an input terminal of the OR gate 74. Further, the latch 20 is an edge-triggered latch.

The circuit 21 is configured to output a binary value having a high logic value whenever the delayed clock signal transitions from a low logic value (e.g., binary 0) to a high logic value (e.g., binary 1). Further, the circuit 21 maintains outputting the binary value having a high logic value after the delayed clock signal transitions from the high logic value to the low logic value, until an enable/reset signal is utilized to reset an output of the circuit 21. The circuit 21 includes a sticky latch 72, an OR gate 74, an AND gate 76, and inverters 78, 80.

The OR gate 74 is configured to output a binary value having a high logic value when either the output signal at the (Q) terminal has a high logic value or an output signal from the sticky latch 72 has a high logic value. Alternately, the OR gate 74 outputs a binary value having a low logic value when both the output signal at the (Q1) terminal has a low logic value and the output signal from the sticky latch 72 has a low logic value. The OR gate 74 has input terminal electrically coupled to the (Q1) terminal of the latch 20 and another input terminal electrically coupled to an output terminal of the sticky latch 72. The OR gate 74 also has an output terminal electrically coupled to an input terminal of the AND gate 76.

The AND gate 76 is configured to output a binary value having a high logic value when both the output signal from the OR gate 70 has a high logic value and the enable/reset signal from the enable/reset device 22 has a high logic value. Alternately, the AND gate 76 is configured to output a binary value having a low logic value when either the output signal from the OR gate 70 has a low logic value or the enable/reset signal from the enable/reset device 22 has a low logic value.

The sticky latch 72 is provided to output a binary value corresponding to the binary value input into the sticky latch 72 whenever a received clock signal transitions from a low logic value to high logic value. The sticky latch 72 has a clock terminal (C2), a data terminal (D2), and an output terminal (Q2). The clock terminal (C2) is electrically coupled to an output terminal of the inverter 80. The data terminal (D2) is electrically coupled to an output terminal of the AND gate 76. The output terminal (Q2) is electrically coupled to the processor 24. In particular, sticky latch 72 is configured to output a binary value corresponding to the binary value input into the data terminal (D2) whenever a received clock signal at clock terminal (C2) transitions from a low logic value to high logic value.

The inverters 78, 80 are electrically coupled in series between a node 32 and the clock terminal (C2) of the sticky latch 72. The inverters 78, 80 have a delay time interval corresponding to the delay time interval of the OR gate 74 and the AND gate 76.

The processor 24 is provided to output a signal to specify a number of components of the delay chain of components 18 to be activated for setting a total delay time interval of the delay chain of components 18. The processor 24 is further configured to calculate a delay time interval for each component of the delay chain of components 18. Further, the processor 24 is configured to calculate a desired selected number of components of the delay chain of components to be activated to obtain a total desired delay time interval between reference clock signal and the delayed clock signal. Further, the processor 24 is configured to generate a bypass signal that induces the switch 12 to route the reference clock signal from the clock 16 to the delay chain of components 18. Still further, the processor 24 is configured to control a number of activated current stages in the adjustable drive-current buffer 84 for controlling an output drive current level applied to the driven circuit 88.

The clock **86** is provided to generate a clock signal that is received by the adjustable drive-current buffer **84**. As shown, the clock **86** is electrically coupled to a node **99** of the adjustable drive-current buffer **84**.

Referring to FIG. 2, the adjustable drive-current buffer **84** is provided to output a desired output drive current that is received by the driven circuit **88**. The adjustable drive-current buffer **84** includes a voltage source **90**, transistors **91**, **92**, **93**, **94**, **95**, **96**, **97** and **98**, and switches **101**, **102**, **103** and **104**. The transistors **91**, **92** are electrically coupled in series between the voltage source **90** and the switch **101**. The transistors **91**, **92** comprise a first current stage. The activation and de-activation of the transistors **91**, **92** is controlled by a clock signal from the clock **86**. The operational state of the switch **101** is controlled by the processor **24**. The transistors **93**, **94** are electrically coupled in series between the voltage source **90** and the switch **102**. The transistors **93**, **94** comprise a second current stage. The activation and de-activation of the transistors **93**, **94** is controlled by a clock signal from the clock **86**. The operational state of the switch **102** is controlled by the processor **24**. The transistors **95**, **96** are electrically coupled in series between the voltage source **90** and the switch **103**. The transistors **95**, **96** comprise a third current stage. The activation and de-activation of the transistors **95**, **96** is controlled by a clock signal from the clock **86**. The operational state of the switch **103** is controlled by the processor **24**. The transistors **97**, **98** are electrically coupled in series between the voltage source **90** and the switch **104**. The transistors **97**, **98** comprise a fourth current stage. The activation and de-activation of the transistors **97**, **98** is controlled by a clock signal from the clock **86**. The operational state of the switch **104** is controlled by the processor **24**. As shown, each of the current stages is electrically coupled to a node **100** that routes a desired output drive current level to the driven circuit **88**.

Referring to FIG. 3, a general overview of a methodology for determining a delay time interval associated with each of the components of the delay chain of components **18** will be explained. Further, a general overview of a methodology for determining a desired selected number of activated components of the delay chain of components **18** will be explained.

When the selected number of components of the delay chain of components **18** equals zero, at time  $T_0$  the delayed clock signal **110** arrives at the latch **20** before the reference clock signal **109**, and a binary "1" is latched by latch **20**. As the number of activated components is increased, the delayed clock signal **94** at the input terminal of the latch **20** lags behind the reference clock signal **109**, so a binary "0" is latched. Similarly, as the number of activated components is further increased, the exemplary delayed clock signals **112**, **113**, **114**, **115**, **116** lag behind reference clock signal **109**, so a binary "0" is latched. When the number of activated components of the delay chain of components **18** is large enough to shift the delayed clock signal **117** by one half of a period of the reference clock signal **109**, a binary "1" is again latched. At time  $T_1$ , the transition from a binary "0" to a binary "1" at the (Q1) output terminal of the latch **20** signifies that the total delay time interval of the delay chain of components **18** is equal to one half of the time period (T) of one cycle of the reference clock signal **109**. If the value (n) corresponds to the number of activated components in the delay chain of components **18**, at this transition, then the delay time interval per component (t) can be determined utilizing the following equation:  $t=T/(2n)$ .

Further, a desired selected number of activated components (m) of the delay chain of components **18** can be determined by utilizing the following equation:  $m=D/t$ ,

wherein (D) corresponds to a total desired delay time interval of the delay chain of components **18**.

Referring to FIGS. 4-6, a flowchart of a method for determining a delay time interval of components will now be explained. In particular, a delay time interval for each of the components of the delay chain of components **18** will be explained.

At step **120**, the delay chain of components **18** having a plurality of components receives a reference clock signal, wherein each component of the delay chain of components **18** has a first delay time interval. The delay chain of components **18** are configured to utilize a selected number of the components thereof to output a delayed clock signal after the delay chain of components receives the reference clock signal.

At step **122**, the processor **24** sends a second signal to the delay chain of components **18** indicating a number of the components of the delay chain of components **18** to be activated.

At step **124**, the latch **20** receives the reference clock signal. The latch **20** has the clock terminal (C1), the data terminal (D1), and the output terminal (Q1). The reference clock signal is input into the clock terminal (C1).

At step **126**, the latch **20** receives the delayed clock signal at the data terminal (D1) from the delay chain of components **18**.

At step **128**, the circuit **21** receives an output signal from the output terminal (Q1) of the latch **20**. The circuit **21** is configured to determine whether the output signal has a high logic value or a low logic value. The circuit **21** is further operably coupled to the processor **24**.

At step **130**, the processor **24** iteratively increases a selected number of the components of the delay chain of components **18** to be activated, for increasing a delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the reference clock signal, until the circuit determines that the output signal from the latch **20** has a low logic value. The selected number being a first selected number when the output signal has the low logic value.

At step **132**, the processor **24** iteratively increases the selected number of the components of the delay chain of components **18** to be activated, for increasing the delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the reference clock signal, until the circuit **21** determines that the output signal from the latch **20** has a high logic value. The selected number is a second selected number when the output signal has the high logic value.

At step **134**, the processor **24** calculates the first delay time interval for each component of the delay chain of components **18**, based on the first selected number, the second selected number, and a time interval of a cycle of the reference clock signal.

At step **136**, the processor **24** calculates a desired selected number of components of the delay chain of components **18** based on the first delay time interval, and a total desired delay time interval between the reference clock signal and the delayed clock signal.

At step **138**, the processor **24** transmits a third signal to the delay chain of components **18** indicating the desired selected number of components of the delay chain of components **18** to be activated.

At step **140**, the delay chain of components **18** activate a portion of the components of the delay chain of components **18** corresponding to the desired selected number of components, in response to the delay chain of components **18** receiving the third signal.

At step **142**, the delay chain of components **18** receives a fourth signal, instead of the reference clock signal, and outputs a fifth signal delayed from the fourth signal a time interval corresponding to the total desired delay time interval.

At step **144**, the processor **24** calculates a correction factor value based on the first delay time interval for each component of the delay chain of components and a designed delay time interval.

At step **146**, the processor **24** induces a predetermined number of current stages in an adjustable drive-current buffer **84** to output a desired output drive current level based on the correction factor value, which is received by a driven circuit **88**. After step **146**, the method is exited.

Referring to FIG. **7**, a system **160** for automatically determining a delayed time interval of components in accordance with another exemplary embodiment is illustrated. The system **160** includes the switch **12**, the signal generator **14**, the clock **16**, the delay chain of components **18**, a circuit **164**, the enable/reset device **22**, and a processor **170**. The primary difference between the system **160** and the system **10**, is that the system **160** utilizes the circuit **164** instead of the circuit **21**, and a processor **170** instead of the processor **24**. Accordingly, only the circuit **164** and the processor **170** will be described in further detail below.

The circuit **164** is provided to determine an output value that is output by the latch **20**. The circuit **164** includes an AND gate **176** and counters **178** and **180**. The AND gate **176** has an input terminal electrically coupled to the output terminal (Q1) of the latch **20**. The AND gate **176** has another input terminal electrically coupled to the node **32**. The AND gate **176** has an output terminal electrically coupled to the counter **178**. The counter **178** is electrically coupled between an output terminal of the AND gate **176** and the processor **170**. The counter **178** is further electrically coupled to the enable/reset device **22**. The counter **180** is electrically coupled between the node **32** and the processor **170**.

During operation, the output value output by the latch **20** is "anded" with the reference clock signal and the output of the AND gate **176** is input into the counter **178**. Accordingly, the count obtained by the counter **178** corresponds to a number of times that a binary "1" is present at the output terminal (Q1) of the latch **20**. The reference clock signal is directly input into the counter **180**. Accordingly, the count obtained by the counter **180** corresponds to the number of cycles of the reference clock signal. If the binary value output by the latch **20** is equal to binary "0" over time, the count in the counter **178** will equal zero, and the count obtained by the counter **180** will equal the number of cycles of the reference clock signal. Alternately, if the binary value output by the latch **20** is equal to binary "1" over time, the count in the counter **178** will equal the count in the counter **180**.

The processor **170** is provided to output a signal to specify a number of components of the delay chain of components **18** to be activated for setting a total delay time interval of the delay chain of components **18**. The processor **170** is further configured to calculate a delay time interval for each component of the delay chain of components **18**, utilizing the counts in both the counter **178** and the counter **180**. Further, the processor **170** is configured to calculate a desired selected number of components of the delay chain of components to be activated to obtain a total desired delay time

interval between reference clock signal and the delayed clock signal. Further, the processor **170** is configured to generate a bypass signal that induces the switch **12** to route the reference clock signal from the clock **16** to the delay chain of components **18**.

The system and the method for determining a delay time interval of components provides a substantial advantage over other methods. In particular, the system and the method provide a technical effect of determining a delay time interval of each component utilized in a delay chain of components.

While the invention is described with reference to an exemplary embodiment, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes may be made and equivalence may be substituted for elements thereof without departing from the scope of the invention. In addition, many modifications may be made to the teachings of the invention to adapt to a particular situation without departing from the scope thereof. Therefore, it is intended that the invention not be limited the embodiment disclosed for carrying out this invention, but that the invention includes all embodiments falling within the scope of the intended claims. Moreover, the use of the term's first, second, etc. does not denote any order of importance, but rather the term's first, second, etc. are used to distinguish one element from another.

We claim:

1. A method for determining a delay time interval of components, comprising:
  - receiving a first clock signal at a delay chain of components having a plurality of components wherein each component of the delay chain of components has a first delay time interval, the delay chain of components being configured to utilize a selected number of the components thereof to output a delayed clock signal after the delay chain of components receives the first clock signal;
  - sending a second signal from a processor to the delay chain of components indicating a number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated;
  - receiving the first clock signal at a latch, the latch having a clock terminal, a data terminal, and an output terminal, the first clock signal being input into the clock terminal, the data terminal receiving the delayed clock signal from the delay chain of components;
  - receiving an output signal from the output terminal at a circuit operably coupled to the output terminal of the latch, the circuit configured to determine whether the output signal has a high logic value or a low logic value, the circuit being further operably coupled to the processor;
  - iteratively increasing a selected number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated utilizing the processor, for increasing a delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the first clock signal, until the circuit determines that the output signal from the latch has a low logic value, the selected number being a first selected number when the output signal has the low logic value;
  - iteratively increasing the selected number of the components of the delay chain of components to be activated utilizing the processor, for increasing the delay time interval between the delayed clock signal and the first clock signal, until the circuit determines that the output signal from the latch has a high logic value, the selected

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number being a second selected number when the output signal has the high logic value; calculating the first delay time interval for each component of the delay chain of components utilizing the processor, based on the first selected number and the second selected number. 5

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the calculating the first delay time interval comprises calculating the first delay time interval utilizing the processor, based on the first selected number, the second selected number, and a time interval of a cycle of the first clock signal. 10

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising calculating a desired selected number of components of the delay chain of components based on the first delay time interval, and a total desired delay time interval between the first clock signal and the delayed clock signal. 15

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4. The method of claim 3, further comprising: transmitting a third signal from the processor to the delay chain of components indicating the desired selected number of components of the delay chain of components to be activated; and

activating a portion of the components of the delay chain of components corresponding to the desired selected number of components, in response to the delay chain of components receiving the third signal.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising inducing an adjustable drive-current buffer operably coupled to the processor to output a desired output current level based on the first delay time interval.

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